

Faith-Based & Community Initiatives Task Force  
Meeting Minutes  
December 17, 2003

**In attendance:**

*Chairman Scott Merriner*

Task Force members:

<i>David Carillo</i>	<i>Carl Ekstrom</i>	<i>Kristin Hamerski</i>	<i>Dr. Judith Kleinfeld</i>
<i>Chris Deck</i>	<i>Talakai Finau</i>	<i>Chris Hayes</i>	<i>Kim Patterson</i>
<i>Fr. Innocent Dresdow</i>	<i>Robert Flint</i>	<i>Lamarr Jensen</i>	<i>Dr. Rory Schneeberger</i>
<i>Renee Duncan</i>	<i>Jack Gwaltney</i>	<i>Pete Kelly</i>	<i>Dr. Stan Tucker</i>

Various Ex-officio members

**Absent**

<i>Sharon Clausen</i>	<i>Dr. Brian Green</i>	<i>Marie Greene</i>	<i>William Nicholson</i>
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**Overview of meeting objectives – Chairman Scott Merriner**

*Meeting Overview:* Hear from the four work groups so that the entire Task Force will know what is being accomplished.

*Meeting Objective:* to talk about Group 1's work and whether it is prudent for the FBCI Task Force to issue a press release.

**Group 1: Assessing gaps in Alaska's social services**

**Presentation of findings:**

Group 1 point people: Marilyn Stewart and Robert Buttane

They were pleased at the responses generated from the surveys they conducted. Surveys were widely disseminated. Thirty-five people submitted 121 separate statement identifying gaps and needs in Alaska's social service system.

Group 1 found that the main gaps/needs fall into three major categories:

1. **Housing:** This is a major issue in Alaska right now for virtually all of the social service client groups served in Alaska including single women with children, the elderly, veterans, working poor, those transitioning into the community from jail, treatment programs, domestic violence abuse shelters, etc. There are many people in Alaska who are considered low income, but who make too much money

to qualify for housing assistance. We also found that treatment facilities separate families when people need family support the most. Ms. Stewart met with Alaska Housing Finance Corporation representatives and learned of another problem; people receiving vouchers for housing have a hard time competing in the general housing market as some landlords do not participate in housing assistance programs. .

Group 1 identified ways in which the Task Force can help alleviate some of these housing problems. For instance, Task Force members could receive training and become housing inspectors to help expedite the approval process. Interested Task Force members and anyone else wishing to volunteer should contact Marilyn Stewart or Robert Buttane.

2. **Personalized Care & Services:** This gap/need category relates to direct care and services between an agency or a person providing services and an individual or family. Childcare is one of the significant needs in this category. Those moving from welfare into the workforce often need help finding safe and affordable childcare. Another common issue is the need for behavioral health services, including mental health and alcohol treatment, counseling and support services. More food assistance programs are needed in Alaska, with better access to existing food banks. Transportation is another part of the problem. The working poor often do not have enough money to pay for a home and a car. Public transportation isn't readily available outside of the urban centers and service limitations create barriers for those who do not have their own transportation. There is also a need for parenting and marriage classes, as well as more after school programs for teens. It has been shown that most teen crime happens between the time after school and before dinner. In addition, there is a need for more coordinated case management and more communication between organizations.

There is a need for groups to provide tangible goods like baby cribs, dentures, and other things that Medicaid does not cover. These needed items could be procured through group fundraising.

As a way to meet some of these needs, it was suggested that church and community groups could establish share-a-ride and coordinated transportation services. Love Inc. in Fairbanks does this with a central dispatch to respond to calls for transportation. Groups can also encourage members to offer jobs and job training to those needing assistance.

The task force asked Group 1 to do more to explain the gap and need items in this category. The original term for this category, "Direct Services" was changed to "Personalized Care and Service."

3. **Relational Support:** This area relates to simple personal relationship and interaction between people, acting as a “buddy” to those involved in social service programs. There is a need for people to be available to be a “friend”, a person someone could trust and have confidence in during a hard time. There is also a need for more foster care for children and help to supervise children during court proceedings or during the time when parents are participating in counseling sessions or training classes. These types of personal relationships will outlast the more “professional” services, providing friendships for life. In this area volunteers are always needed, just someone to listen and be there. Volunteers could do little things like teaching someone to cook, home economics, etc. to help people move forward in their life.

### **Task Force Discussion:**

The question of whether or not the Task Force should issue a policy statement for the development and implementation of removing gaps/needs through faith and community groups was put before the Task Force. The Task Force decided to wait to issue a policy statement.

### **Group 2: Best Practices in FBCI**

Group 2 Point person: Dr. Judith Kleinfeld

A great deal of research has been done on the national level regarding FBCI efforts. Dr. Kleinfeld believes the Alaska Task Force is truly breaking new ground. Most of the web search results for FBCI came up with the Alaska FBCI Task Force website. Group 2 did a survey on what is “out there.” There turned out to be little tangible results, and it looks like the work the Alaska Task Force is doing will receive national attention and greatly benefit other states. Alaska is leading the country!

Group 2 canvassed the faith-based and volunteer communities and put together a list of the organizations that are doing an especially good job meeting the gaps/needs addressed by Group 1.

1. Love Inc. (several nominations)
2. Salvation Army
3. Community Health Program, Cross Road Medical Center, Glenallen
4. Catholic Social Services
5. Lutheran Social Services
6. Crisis Pregnancy Center
7. Southcentral Foundation
8. Sitka Faith in Action
9. Bridges--Kenai Peninsula (contact June Stein, Soldotna)
10. Valley Conference of Churches, Mat-Su Valley
11. Forget-Me-Not, Anchorage
12. Alaska Beliefs Chaplainary
13. Rock--Kenai Peninsula

It was suggested that Group 1 and Group 2 should interface effort. The organizations on the list of best practices showed a great deal of geographic diversity. Group 2 found that it would be very helpful to have a list of organizations' phone numbers and addresses so that more families could find the organizations that can best help them.

**Group 2's next step:** Going to those organizations listed on the best practices list and find out exactly how they are meeting the needs of Alaskans. Group 2 will interface with Group 1.

#### **Group 4: Possible FBCI Legislation**

Group 4 Point person: Kim Patterson

Group 4's assessment of possible FBCI legislation began with closely reviewing the FBCI interviews, determining whether there needs to be any statutory changes or better partnerships. Group 4 focused closely on FBCI Interview questions 7-9. Group 1's work was also incorporated to make Group 4's Community Responses List of 5 categories: Education, Funding, Housing, Direct Services and Relational Support. Group 4 will work hand in hand with the Ex-Officio members, many of whom are in the Legislature.

**Group 4's next step:** Determining if any new legislation is needed to empower faith and community organizations. Group 4 has some possible legislative ideas such as: school vouchers. Previous attempts have not passed the legislature. Task Force members will be asked whether or not a school voucher bill should be resubmitted. Other possible legislation relates to direct services and vicarious. Group 4 will research laws currently in place to see if they adequately protect faith and community groups.

A concern for the Task Force has been not rushing into recommending any legislation. The deadline for submitting legislation for the next legislative session is right after the next Task Force meeting in January. The Task Force should work to identify simple legislation that meets needs and get that legislation introduced if appropriate. There will be more opportunities for submitting ideas for legislation in the fall. The Task Force can also make a difference by supporting legislation that helps faith and community groups.

#### **Task Force Discussion:**

The Task Force should check into the availability of grant money for school abstinence programs since the Federal government offers grants for these programs. Another suggestion was temperance education since Alaska has such a high rate of alcohol abuse.

#### **Group 3: Resourcing FBCI**

Group 3 Point Person: Gwen Hall

Group 3 is working on the FBCI Conference, which will be held at the Egan Center in Anchorage, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004, from 9 a.m.-4:00 p.m. with the Stars of Gold Awards Banquet following the conference. Ms. Hall encouraged all of the Task Force members

(even those not directly involved with Group 3) to come to the conference and also provide input as to how the conference should be constructed. We would like the FBCI Conference to draw people from all over Alaska. Task Force members should submit workshop and other suggestions for the conference (e.g. should the conference cover grant writing? Best practices? Overview of FBCI accomplishments? Presentation on faith and community groups? Constitutionality of FBCI?) to Gwen Hall.

### **Task Force Discussion on the FBCI Conference:**

Structurally it should blend breakout workshops and networking time. The conference should discuss Group 1's three categories of needs/gaps. Many thought that the conference should be kept simple in a general session format. Another suggestion was that of considering emotional impact for the audience in the work that faith and community groups are doing, presenting people to speak from all points of view (e.g. state officials, federal officials, faith & community organizations, and clients). This will demonstrate to both the audience and the reporters how instrumental faith and community groups are to our communities, state, and country. The key sentiment was that everyone needs to leave the conference feeling motivated, and passionate. Everyone is invited. The issue of charging or not is still being discussed.

So far the promotion and advertising of the conference will include: postings on the Lieutenant Governor's web page, ads in local newspapers across the state, and letters sent to the Lieutenant Governor's mailing list about the Stars of Gold recognition program and the FBCI conference. Ms. Hall encouraged all of the Task Force members to contact her if they have or know of other media opportunities.

Next meeting there will be a more thorough report. March 1, 2004 is the deadline for Stars of Gold nominations.

An interview matrix is being created to compile the answers to the interview questions.

Task Force members were reminded to send in their last two interviews to Ms. Hall by Friday (Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>, 2003).

### **Wrap up by Chairman Scott Merriner**

We have come very far in 12 weeks, over 100 interviews, 4 working groups; we are flying forward, with very valuable accomplishments. Our Task Force is really ahead of the game, and has turned words into action with real results!

Task Force members were encouraged to visit the FBCI link to the Lieutenant Governor's web page, as it has been updated with a section called the Chairman's Corner and other new additions.

Minutes prepared by Kristin Lee Hamerski